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Sen. Van Woerkom bill to make Friend of the Court payments timelier passed by Senate committee

LANSING – A bill to require the state to provide custodial parents with Friend of the Court payments electronically either by direct deposit or through a debit card system was passed by a Senate committee today, said Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores.

“Distributing Friend of the Court payments electronically will greatly decrease the time child support money spends in transit,” said Van Woerkom, the bill’s sponsor. “By updating the delivery system of the checks we are ensuring that custodial parents have the resources they need to take care of their children.”

Senate Bill 1319 would require Michigan to create an electronic distribution system established through direct deposit or a debit card system. The changes in technology would be similar to the technology the Family Independence Agency is currently using to distribute its benefits.

The bill also would eliminate the distribution of Friend of the Court payments through paper checks.

“Senator Van Woerkom’s bill accommodates custodial parents who do not have bank accounts and eliminates the need to generate paper checks which reduces mailing expenses,” said Patricia Steele, administrator of the Muskegon County Friend of the Court. “It eliminates the possibility that a check will be delivered to a bad address and could significantly reduce the amount of time child support money spends sitting in suspended accounts instead of in the hands of custodial parents.”

Senate Bill 1319 will now be considered by the full Senate.

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Editor’s note: A downloadable photograph of Van Woerkom and Ms. Steele is available on the Senate Majority Photowire at:
<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Van%20Woerkom/Van%20Woerkom.htm>